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Readings Booklet

June 1999



English 33

Part B: Reading

Grade 12 Diploma Examination

Alberta
EDUCATION

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June 1999

English 33

Part B: Reading

Readings Booklet

Grade 12 Diploma Examination

Description

Part B: Reading contributes 50% of the total English 33 Diploma Examination mark.

There are 9 reading selections in the Readings Booklet and 70 questions in the Questions Booklet.

Time: 2 hours. This examination was developed to be completed in 2 hours; however, you may take an additional ½ hour to complete the examination.

Instructions

- Be sure that you have an English 33 Readings Booklet **and** an English 33 Questions Booklet.
- You may **not** use a dictionary, thesaurus, or other reference materials.



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- I. Questions 1 to 9 in your Questions Booklet are based on this excerpt from a short story.**

from BELLA'S STORY

Rene comes down the street wearing green shorts and a light cap to shade his eyes from the sun. He is nocturnal and he roams the high walled space between fences, usually in shadow, an alley man and also a thief. He waits for Bella. He stands at the bus stop, ill at ease or simply ill, waiting, huddled against the wind,
5 his twig legs too thin and twisted to support the weight of his responsibilities. He will use a cane before long, though he is young, maybe forty. Death sings in his ear and his life is frail and full of silences.

In summer, he sits in Bella's weed garden shelling peas for supper, or painting bits of junkyard furniture. They have a garage sale every other weekend.
10 They sell trinkets: painted egg cartons, tin cans, and old cups; but really they merchandise stolen bicycles, radar detectors, and car radios, anything he can find. Rene drinks beer under the apple tree and plays with Susie, the love child. She is only three, and she likes to play butterflies. She flaps her arms like wings and twirls off the back steps. He catches her in midair and swings her round and
15 round. Rene didn't need another child. He had trouble enough feeding Jean and Bella. But Bella wanted a girl. She wanted to buy dresses and braid baby-fine hair.

Bella has a weed garden three feet high and a picnic table in the shade, with a fresh cloth and flowers. She pays attention to detail. She has to or they would all
20 starve. From May to September, she prunes and plants and rearranges things. She wears a straw hat and squats on the back step drinking coffee. Sometimes she goes into the garden to pick refugee strawberries for lunch. The soil is full of maggots, but the strawberries are sweet and full of flowers.

Since early spring, Rene and Bella have been outside, digging out dead grass,
25 turning soil, crossing paths, and avoiding speech. Bella swallows his words bitterly and spits them back at him in the full sunshine of the neighbourhood.

"I will not sell wheels," she says. "The bicycles are stolen. I didn't know that, Rene."

"Where . . . do you think I got them, sister?" He stops, wipes his forehead
30 with dirty hands, then stabs his fork into the mud. . . .

Many years . . . have taught her things, especially the value of silence. She watches him go but says nothing. . . .

They fight over trivial things: a late supper, a missed bus, a new pair of shoes.

Continued

35 "I need shoes for work," she says.
"We need to eat," he says.
"Damn it, Rene. I'm on my feet all night. I can't wear these. I'm worn out."
"So quit."
"... you're mean," she says and turns away.

40 Bella works the evening shift at a Salisbury House, frying hash browns and burgers. It doesn't pay much but it helps. At least she gets her meal there, and sometimes stale buns to take home. And tips. She stashes the money in a jar and hides it behind the fridge. It's safe there.

Rene hasn't had a real job in seven years. He's worked a few months here
45 and there: TV repairs, encyclopedia sales, even carpet cleaning. But nothing's come of it. He still dreams of going back on the road. Bella dreams of a day at the beach, hunting seashells with Susie, and lying in the sun with nothing to do.

In the autumn, Rene goes deer hunting with his brother. He doesn't like his
brother and he'd rather not go, but he can't refuse. They need the meat for the
50 freezer. As the two of them drive up the B-grade highway into the Manitoba brush, he is sullen, slouched down into his seat and thinking. He dreams of his former life: the endless flat of the Trans-Canada, the cheap hotels, the quick burgers, and even the miniature moccasins he used to bring back for Jean.

When he returns, they celebrate. They carry a picnic down to the old
55 basilica¹ and sit in the courtyard among the ruins eating roast duck and potatoes. Bella bakes bread and apples for the occasion. They eat outside one last time because after this the days are short and the wind is cold, snow comes and they put plastic over the windows to keep away the draughts. But this is a time of celebration. They pass around the chokecherry wine and lean against the cool
60 stone walls and the stories come out like stars.

Rene tells the stories. "Things were really good back then," he says. He rolls up his shirt-sleeves and pours himself a drink. His arms are bony and it seems that his hands are too large. Susie crawls into his lap and he strokes her hair because Bella isn't available. She's busy packing up the picnic and scrubbing a
65 stain out of her skirt. Duck grease from Susie's fingers. He pours a drink for Bella and watches Jean. . . .

. . . Jean slumps against the wall, a little way off. He is absorbed by the grit under his nails. He pretends to be bored, but he isn't. He's seventeen.

Rene pours wine, and begins again. "When I had the business, we had
70 everything. Didn't we Bella? You name it: TV sets, radios, even a new stereo. I was the first one to get air conditioning in the car. See, I lived in my car back then, Jean. Had a trunk full all the time. Carload Bouchard they used to call me. I'd sell anything. Always hustling. Always trying to make a buck. And it

Continued

¹basilica—a Roman Catholic church with ceremonial privileges

75 worked too. People liked me. I wasn't pushy, but I had a feel for it. You got a
feel after awhile. A taste. And the miles spinning by. It was like flying. Man, I
was flying." Rene stops, and spreads his arms wide to take in the whole ruined
courtyard. As if he owns it.

"And all the time I'm calculating all that money in my head. Just driving.
Don't get me wrong, son. You've gotta be tough. Wasn't easy to work on
80 commission. You see, people trust you. You've gotta be honest. But you've
gotta hustle. It's all a balancing act."

Rene balances the glass on his knee, and waves for Bella to come closer to
him. Jean lights a cigarette. Through the smoke rings he watches Rene. He can
almost love his father now. He can almost forget . . . the names he's called Bella
85 . . . the way he steals cigarettes and won't admit it. Bella comes and sits down.
Rene puts an arm around her, and Jean winces. At seventeen, he vacillates
between love and hate. He pulls his black hair into a ponytail and kicks at a stone.
He remembers the cool dives into northern lakes and his father's green eyes,
which weren't as hard as stones then. He decides to stay for the stories. He
90 has heard them so often that he knows they are true. He will defend them
endlessly because he doesn't want to lose the memory of lakes, and fish, and his
father's eyes.

Diane Juttner Perreault

Contemporary Canadian writer

"Bella's Story" was her first published piece

II. Questions 10 to 14 in your Questions Booklet are based on this poem.

STAR BRIGHT¹

- I remember a night of childhood in late August
Going home from a picnic. There were, I think,
Six or so of us in an old wagon.
The horse clop-clopped along the dusty road.
5 I made a wish, I remember, on the first star,
And then we sat and tried to count the stars.
It might have taken as long, we thought, to count them
As to count the pebbles lying on the road
That seemed the stars' reflections. They seemed so far,
10 Untouched by any sentimental song
Or speculations of astronomers.
We sang a while, until the shadowy trees
And the calm moonlight stilled the song to rest;
Then huddled closer, like young animals
15 That warm each other in the cool of night.

- I wonder what my wish was on the star:
Maybe for riches, like the girl whose apron
Was filled with falling stars that turned to coins;
Maybe for glory, like a crown of stars;
20 Maybe to travel far and far away,
Where different constellations burned in the air;
Maybe for love to turn my blood to stars.
I can't somehow remember, but I wish—
Or half wish, maybe—I could find myself
25 On a calm August evening in a creaking wagon
Driving home between the rows of pines.

Elizabeth Brewster
Contemporary Canadian poet,
novelist, and short-story writer

¹Star Bright—refers to the following nursery rhyme entitled “First Star”:

*Star light, star bright
First star I see tonight
I wish I may, I wish I might,
Have the wish I wish tonight.*

III. Questions 15 to 21 in your Questions Booklet are based on this excerpt from a short story.

from ODOUR OF CHRYSANTHEMUMS¹

The events in the following excerpt take place in an English coal-mining village in the early 1900s.

The house was quiet. Elizabeth Bates took off her hat and shawl, and sat down. It was a few minutes past nine. She was startled by the rapid chuff of the winding-engine² at the pit, and the sharp whirr of the brakes on the rope as it descended. She put her hand to her side, saying aloud: "Good gracious!—it's
5 only the nine o'clock deputy³ going down," rebuking herself.

She sat still, listening. Half an hour of this, and she was wearied out.

"What am I working myself up like this for?" she said pitifully to herself.

"I [shall] only be doing myself some damage."

She took out her sewing again.

10 At a quarter to ten there were footsteps. One person! She watched for the door to open. It was an elderly woman, in a black bonnet and a black woollen shawl—his mother. She was about sixty years old, pale, with blue eyes, and her face all wrinkled and lamentable. She shut the door and turned to her daughter-in-law peevishly.⁴

15 "Eh, Lizzie, whatever shall we do, whatever shall we do!" she cried.

Elizabeth drew back a little, sharply.

"What is it, mother?" she said.

The elder woman seated herself on the sofa.

"I don't know, child, I can't tell you!"—she shook her head slowly.

20 Elizabeth sat watching her, anxious and vexed.

"I don't know," replied the grandmother, sighing very deeply. "There's no end to my troubles, there isn't. The things I've gone through, [I'm] sure it's enough —!" She wept without wiping her eyes, the tears running.

"But, mother," interrupted Elizabeth, "what do you mean? What is it?"

25 The grandmother slowly wiped her eyes. The fountains of her tears were stopped by Elizabeth's directness. She wiped her eyes slowly.

"Poor child! Eh, you poor thing!" she moaned. "I don't know what we're going to do, I don't—and you as you are—it's a thing, it is indeed!"

Elizabeth waited.

Continued

¹Chrysanthemums—in the past, these spicy smelling flowers were used at funerals to cover the smell of the decaying body

²winding-engine—motor used for hoisting and lowering the elevator at a coal-mine

³deputy—coal-mine overseer who is responsible for safety

⁴peevishly—fretfully

30 “Is he dead?” she asked, and at the words her heart swung violently, though she felt a slight flush of shame at the ultimate extravagance of the question. Her words sufficiently frightened the old lady, brought her to herself.

“Don’t say so, Elizabeth! We’ll hope it’s not as bad as that; no, may the Lord spare us that, Elizabeth. Jack Rigley came just as I was sittin’ down to a glass
35 afore going to bed, an’ ’e said: ‘’Appen you’ll go down th’ line, Mrs. Bates. Walt’s had an accident. ’Appen you’ll go an’ sit wi’ ’er till we can get him home.’ I hadn’t time to ask him a word afore he was gone. An’ I put my bonnet on an’ come straight down, Lizzie. I thought to myself: ‘Eh, that poor blessed child, if anybody should come an’ tell her of a sudden, there’s no knowin’ what’ll ’appen
40 to ’er.’ You mustn’t let it upset you, Lizzie.”

Elizabeth’s thoughts were busy elsewhere. If he was killed—would she be able to manage on the little pension and what she could earn?—she counted up rapidly. If he was hurt—they wouldn’t take him to the hospital—how tiresome he would be to nurse!—but perhaps she’d be able to get him away from the drink and
45 his hateful ways. She would—while he was ill. The tears offered to come to her eyes at the picture. But what sentimental luxury was this she was beginning? She turned to consider the children. At any rate she was absolutely necessary for them. They were her business.

“Ay!” repeated the old woman, “it seems but a week or two since he brought
50 me his first wages. Ay—he was a good lad, Elizabeth, he was, in his way. I don’t know why he got to be such a trouble, I don’t. He was a happy lad at home, only full of spirits. But there’s no mistake he’s been a handful of trouble, he has! I hope the Lord’ll spare him to mend his ways. I hope so. I hope so. You’ve had a sight o’ trouble with him, Elizabeth, you have indeed. But he was a jolly enough
55 lad wi’ me, he was, I can assure you. I don’t know how it is . . .”

The old woman continued to muse⁵ aloud, a monotonous irritating sound, while Elizabeth thought concentratedly, startled once, when she heard the winding-engine chuff quickly, and the brakes skirr with a shriek. Then she heard the engine more slowly, and the brakes made no sound. The old woman did not
60 notice. Elizabeth waited in suspense. The mother-in-law talked, with lapses into silence.

“But he wasn’t your son, Lizzie, an’ it makes a difference. Whatever he was, I remember him when he was little, an’ I learned to understand him and make allowances. You’ve got to make allowances for them—”

65 It was half-past ten, and the old woman was saying: “But it’s trouble from beginning to end; you’re never too old for trouble, never too old for that—” when the gate banged, and there were heavy feet on the steps.

Continued

⁵muse—reflect, think

“I’ll go, Lizzie, let me go,” cried the old woman, rising. But Elizabeth was at the door. It was a man in pit-clothes.

70 “They’re bringin’ ’im, Missis,” he said. Elizabeth’s heart halted a moment. Then it surged on again, almost suffocating her.

“Is he—is it bad?” she asked.

The man turned away, looking at the darkness:

“The doctor says ’e’d been dead hours. ’E saw ’im i’ th’ lamp-cabin.”⁶

75 The old woman, who stood just behind Elizabeth, dropped into a chair, and folded her hands, crying: “Oh, my boy, my boy!”

“Hush!” said Elizabeth, with a sharp twitch of a frown. “Be still, mother, don’t waken th’ children: I wouldn’t have them down for anything!”

D.H. Lawrence (1885–1930)
British novelist, poet, and essayist

⁶lamp-cabin—storage area for lanterns found at the level closest to the surface of a mine

IV. Questions 22 to 28 in your Questions Booklet are based on this article.

GLOBAL PROBLEMS ARE TOO BIG FOR LITTLE KIDS

The local newspaper in the Indiana town where I was teaching last year ran a contest for school-children. The students were to create a one-frame cartoon on any topic; the best would be published on the “Kid’s Page.” A sample of the winning entries revealed a common theme.

- 10 A girl in Grade 2 drew a sad-faced planet Earth, with the caption, “I am weary. I am tired. Please quit wasting me!” A boy in Grade 6 sketched some mountain-sized hills beside a sign reading “Landfill,” with one tiny person pointing out to another, “Here we have the tallest hill in Bloomington.” A girl in Grade 3 depicted a number of crying animals looking at a house under construction with some smokestacks in the background; the caption read, “We want our homes back!!!” Other entries showed black South Africans being crushed under the boot of apartheid, mushroom clouds emerging from backyards, and forests being cut down by huge chain saws.

- 30 Such a common focus could be coincidence, conscious indoctrination,¹ or the honest effort of teachers to get students involved in important issues. Some teachers do use their power to indoctrinate;

- 40 most of us have had experience with them. But most teachers are motivated by the best of intentions: They want their students to become informed, independent and committed thinkers.

- Even so, we have a real problem: Many children are coming home from school frightened. After some coaxing, the parent is told that the child fears the world is a cold and scary place. All the furry animals are being killed and all the nice green trees are being cut down. Even breathing the air is dangerous.

- 50 It’s a truism that you can’t teach calculus before arithmetic. In trying to convey their sense of urgency about the world’s problems, many teachers are committing an analogous² error.

- 60 Children are not able to deal with problems of international garbage disposal when they are still grappling with issues of personal hygiene. They are not able to put in context issues of international race relations when they are struggling with how to deal with schoolyard bullies and being talked about behind their backs.

- 70 When students are overloaded, they become frustrated and frightened. When they think the

Continued

¹indoctrination—to teach uncritical acceptance of a system of thought

²analogous—similar to, parallel

problems they are being asked to consider are too much to absorb, they give up trying to understand. If the teacher persists, the student simply mouths the appropriate words to appease him or her.

80 My college freshmen classes are regularly populated by young adults who are convinced that no solutions are possible and so it's useless to try, or who are so desperate for answers that they latch on to the first semi-plausible solution they encounter and become close-minded. Both apathy and dogmatism³ are defense mechanisms against feeling that you are living in a hostile world whose problems are too big for you to handle. And these are attitudes children often acquire early in their school careers.

100 This does not mean educators and parents should pretend that problems do not exist. But many of these issues, by definition, are complex global issues—issues that many adults have difficulties dealing with intellectually and emotionally. We need to take extra pains to teach our children about the principles involved on a scale they can grasp.

If we want our six- and seven-year-olds to be ready to deal with acid rain when their time comes,

110 teach them now how to care for a 30-gallon aquarium and why they shouldn't throw candy wrappers into the ravine. If we want them to be in a position to handle the Saddam Husseins of the world, help them now to evolve strategies for dealing with the little tyrant who extorts their lunch money and the kid who always wants to copy their homework. These are the problems they are engaged with and ready to consider solutions for.

120 Do not ask them now what they would do if terrorists exploded chemical weapons above their town or what we could do if the food chain were irreparably damaged by pollution, for the child can only think, "If I could die at any moment, what's the use of worrying about anything?"

130 Frightened or apathetic children are not going to grow into the adults who will be able to solve the world's problems. Problem-solving requires a confidence that solutions can be discovered and a healthy self-esteem about one's ability to find them. These attitudes require nurturing over a long period of time, on countless small, day-to-day issues. Too much too fast can only destroy them.

Stephen R.C. Hicks
Contemporary Canadian writer

³dogmatism—authoritative, arrogant assertion of unproved or unprovable principles

V. Read the print copy of a draft of Robin's e-mail to his cousin Darren, who is away on a student exchange program. Note the revisions, and answer questions 29 to 34 in your Questions Booklet.

June 15, 1999

Hi Darren,

Paragraph I'd love to see your expression when you get this e-mail from me. So why the
1 break from my usual phone call? I had to write a report on my work experience placement and when I was finished, I thought, "This was a cool experience. I'd like to tell Darren about it." So I've cut three paragraphs from my work experience report and pasted them into this e-mail.

Paragraph School was basically the same this year except that I had too many free periods,
2 so the principle made me take Work Experience 25 for extra credits. I was assigned duties as a helper in a Grade 2 class, and the first few days were chaotic. Every time I turned around, there were runny noses to wipe and ^{the tales' stories} ~~a bossy~~
^{to sort out.} ~~teacher~~. When the teacher left the room, the kids would go wild throwing pencils and erasers around the room, standing on top of their desks, and pinching and punching each other.

Paragraph Gradually though, the situation improved. My supervising teacher, who seemed
3 like such an old tyrant to begin with, was actually a good teacher and was ^{really helped her out} ~~wild about~~ ~~pleased with~~ my performance because I ¹ ~~assisted her~~ with a project. My part in the project was to introduce a science unit to the class. ^{This unit was related to the} ~~The~~ preservation of the endangered species of the Amazon Forest. Luckily, I remembered an article that I had read entitled "Global Problems Are Too Big for Little Kids." It talked about the dangers of exposing kids too soon to major world problems. I showed ^{the article} ~~it~~ to my supervising teacher, and she agreed with ^{its message.} ~~it~~.

Continued

Paragraph We then worked out a plan for the students to explore a manageable topic. What
4 we did first is take the students to the computer lab to do research on zoo
animals. Then we took the class to the local zoo one afternoon a week for two
months. Each student adopted an animal at the zoo and was placed in charge of
its feeding and maintenance. The children were able to use what they'd learned
about animals from their research on the Internet. In addition, by observing
animals first hand, the students learned to appreciate and respect nature. In
time, as stated in the article, they will obtain the "confidence that solutions can be
discovered."

Paragraph Now don't laugh Darren, but this work experience project has really made me
5 think about a career working with kids. Not as a teacher though. Who would want
to be like our mothers and spend evenings marking papers?

Take care,

Robin

VI. Questions 35 to 42 in your Questions Booklet are based on this poem.

UNBUILDING

Stepping around bales
of fencing wire and a clutter
of machine parts on my way
to class

5 I stopped to watch two men
on top of the building next to mine
tossing rectangles
of old or damaged asphalt

10 sheets off the roof and
into the bed
of a red pickup parked
four floors below on the grass.

I stopped
out of habit, to give
15 odds on a miss—one out of ten
seemed right—but these two

never missed. They had
a rhythm going. Their bandannas,
fastened over nose
20 and mouth, dipped

and swung up as their arms did,
the whole torso
curving then straightening
over their braced legs,

25 and one gold earring,
the taller man's, flashing out
as if it were itself charged
with movement

Continued

and music. There might have been
30 music—a Walkman, perhaps—but I
couldn't hear it.
There must certainly have been

carcinogens¹ and bitumen² scruff
floating up from the tiles,
35 but I couldn't see it.
From the ground, it was purely

beautiful. Two men
in silhouette against a noon-
blazed blue, lifting and releasing
40 like blue-work-

shirted angels
clearing the sky of decades of
dust, so the day's
work might begin again.

Lynne McMahon
Contemporary American poet

¹carcinogens—substances that cause cancer

²bitumen—tar-like mixture derived from the distillation of petroleum

VII. Questions 43 to 50 in your Questions Booklet are based on this narrative.

SPEAKING SASKATCHEWAN

In summer the thick green poplar leaves clicked and flickered at him, in winter the stiff spruce rustled with voices. The boy, barefoot in the heat or trussed up like a lumpy package against the fierce, silver cold, went alone to the bush where everything spoke: the warm rocks, the flit of quick, small animals, a dart of
5 birds, tree trunks, burning air, ground, the squeaky snow: everything as he breathed and became aware, its language clear as the water of his memory when he lay in the angle of the house rafters at night listening to the mosquitoes slowly find him under his blanket, though he had his eyes shut and only one ear uncovered. Everything spoke, and it spoke Low German.¹

10 Like his mother. She would call him long, long into the summer evening when it seemed the sun burned all night down in the north, call long and slow as if she were already weeping and when he appeared beside her she would bend her wide powerful hands about his head and kiss him so hard his eyes rang. “Why don’t you answer, you?” she would speak against his hair. “Why don’t you ever
15 answer when I call, it’s so dark, why don’t you ever say a word?” While he nuzzled his face into the damp apron at the fold of her thigh, and soon her words would be over and he heard her skin and warm apron smelling of saskatoon jam and dishes and supper buns love him back.

His sister laughed at his solitary silence. “In school are thirty kids,” she
20 would say, “you’ll have to talk, and English at that. You can’t say Low German there, and if you don’t answer English when she asks, the teacher will make you stand in the corner.”

“Right in front, of people?” he would ask fearfully.

“Yeah, in front of every one of them, your face against the wall. So you
25 better start to talk, English too.”

And she would try to teach him English names for things, but he did not listen to that. Rather, when he was alone he practised standing in the corners of walls. Their logs shifted and cracked, talking. Walls were very good, especially where they came together so warm in winter.

30 But outside was even better, and he followed a quiet trail of the muskrat that had dented the snow with its tail between bullrushes sticking out of the slough² ice, or waited for the coyote to turn and see him, its paw lifted and about to touch a drift, its jaw opening on a red tongue laughing with him. In summer he heard a mother bear talk to her cubs among the willows of the horse pasture, though he

Continued

¹Low German—a German dialect

²slough—a swamp

35 did not see them, but he found their sluffing paw prints in the spring snow and his father said something would have to be done if they came that close to the pig fence again. The boy knew his father refused to own a gun, but their nearest neighbour west gladly hunted everywhere to shoot whatever he heard about and so he folded his hands over the huge, wet prints and whispered in Low German, 40 “Don’t visit here any more. It’s dangerous.”

The school sat on the corner, just below the hill where the road turned south along the creek to the church and the store. He never looked at the school, the tiny panes of its four huge windows staring at him, just staring. The day before he had to go there every day like his sister, the planes came for the first time.

45 Their horses were pulling the wagon up the hill as slowly, steadily as they always did and it happened very fast, almost before he looked around. There had been a rumble from somewhere like thunder, far away, though the sky was clear sunlight and his father had just said in a week they could start bindering the oats, it was ripening so well, and his mother sat beside him broad and straight as 50 always, her braided, waist-long hair coiled up for church under her hat when the roaring planes were there as he turned, four, yellow-and-black, louder than anything he had ever heard. West over the school and the small grain fields and pastures and all the trees and hills to the far edge of the world. His father would not look around, holding the horses in carefully, muttering, “Now it comes here 55 too, that war training,” but the boy was looking at his mother. Perhaps his own face looked like that next morning when the yellow planes came over the school at recess, so low he saw huge glass eyes in the horrible leather head glare down at him before he screamed and ran inside to the desk where his sister had said he must sit. When he opened his eyes the face of the teacher was there, her gentle 60 face very close, smiling almost up-side-down at him between the iron legs of the desk beneath which he crouched. Her gentle voice.

“Come,” she said, “come,” and after a moment he scrambled to his feet; he thought she was speaking Low German because he did not know yet that what that word meant was spoken the same in English. Not touching him, she led him 65 between desks to a cupboard against the wall opposite the windows and opened its narrow door. Books. He has never imagined so many books. There may be a million.

She is, of course, speaking to him in English and later, when he remembers that moment again and again, he will never be able to explain how he can 70 understand what she is saying. The open book in her hand shows him countless words: words, she tells him, he can now only see the shape of, but he will be able to hear them when he learns to read, and that the word “READ” in English is the same word as “SPEAK,” *raed*, in Low German and through reading all the people

Continued

75 of the world will speak to him from books, when he reads he will be able to hear
them, and he will understand. He is staring at what he later knows are a few worn
books on a few shelves, and then staring back at the few visible but as yet
unintelligible words revealed in her hand, and slowly he understands that there are
shelves and shelves of books in great stacks on many, many floors inside all the
80 walls of the enormous libraries of the world where he will go and read: where the
knowing she will now help him discover within himself will allow him to listen to
human voices speaking from everywhere and every age, saying everything, things
both dreadful and beautiful, and all that can be imagined between them; and that
he will listen. He will listen to those voices speaking now for as long as he lives.

Rudy Wiebe
Contemporary Canadian writer

VIII. Questions 51 to 59 in your Questions Booklet are based on this excerpt from a play.

from CAKE-WALK

The setting is the kitchen of the once popular Bayview Inn, where the Cake-Walk baking competition is to be held as part of the annual Canada Day celebrations.

CHARACTERS:

Sister Leigh Cleary—a nun in her early 30s. Her friend, Martha Britch, knows that she is a nun. The audience is aware of this as well. Sister Leigh has decided not to mention the fact that she is a nun to the other competitors because she is concerned that this disclosure may make them feel uneasy. Martha Britch—and her husband, Jake, own the Heaven-on-Earth Restaurant. Martha helps out in Little League baseball. She is in her early 30s and is always in a rush.

Taylor Abbott—is single, in his early 30s. He is an archeologist by profession; his hobby is baking.

Ruby Abel—a Cub Scout Leader who is determined to win the Cake-Walk competition in any way that she can. She is wearing a Cub Scout leader outfit.

Augusta Connors Secord—is hoping to win the Cake-Walk competition with the 3-tier wedding cake she has baked for her daughter’s forthcoming wedding.

MARTHA: I’m Martha Britch. And this is the Heaven-on-Earth carrot cake.

TAYLOR: Congratulations! It’s the best carrot cake I’ve ever tasted.

MARTHA: You’ve been to my café?

TAYLOR: Quite often. (*Crestfallen*)¹ You didn’t notice did you?

5 **MARTHA (*Kindly*):** I’m not there all the time. . . .

LEIGH: . . . I’m Leigh Cleary by the way. And this is the Cleary chocolate cheesecake.

TAYLOR: It looks decadent.²

LEIGH: That’s what I’ve always said about it!

10 **TAYLOR (*Charmed by her . . .*):** I didn’t give my cake a title.

Continued

¹Crestfallen—downhearted

²decadent—self-indulgent, creating excessive pleasure

- RUBY: Judges can't enter cakes.
- TAYLOR: Oh, I certainly hope not. (*Pauses, realizes*) Ohhh, you think I'm a judge? Is that why you—oh no. I'm a Cake-Walker, too.
- RUBY: But you're a man.
- 15 TAYLOR: Yes. I am.
- RUBY: Are you registered?
- TAYLOR: Yes.
- RUBY: Where's your number then?
- TAYLOR: Oh, do I have to wear it now? Here it is. (*Pulls the number 1 out of his pocket.*)
- 20 RUBY: Number 1! I'm Abel. How'd you beat that?
- TAYLOR: I'm Abbott, Taylor Abbott. I'm sorry if I deceived you, I didn't mean to.
- LEIGH: Our mistake. (*LEIGH helps him put his 1 on.*)
- 25 MARTHA: We were being sexist. We deserved it.
- RUBY: Are you a chef or something?
- TAYLOR: Or something. (*Pause*) I'm an archaeologist. I lecture at the University of Toronto. I cook as a hobby and to survive. This is an equal opportunity contest isn't it?
- 30 MARTHA: Yes it is. Welcome.
- TAYLOR: Thank you.
- AUGUSTA: How novel, a male in the competition.
- RUBY: Hmpfh. Buckey's³ not gonna like this one bit. . . .
- AUGUSTA: I think this makes it all the more challenging don't you?
- 35 RUBY: Men have never been in the Cake-Walk before.
- TAYLOR: Oh yes, yes they have. (*Professorial*) Men were in the Cake-Walk first. It began as a competition in Louisiana where waiters were awarded a cake for the best walk. Later it evolved into a fancy dance. It's where we get the term "taking the cake."
- 40 LEIGH: Really?
- TAYLOR: Ah, yes. I researched it all before entering. I wanted to make sure that I wasn't upsetting some ancient women's ritual.
- RUBY: You're not from here. How'd you get in?
- TAYLOR: My cousin, she lives near here and knew I'd be coming up for an excavation this summer so she entered my name in the lottery.⁴
- 45 RUBY: What's her name?
- MARTHA (*Sarcastically*): She's going to answer to town council for that.

Continued

³Buckey's—Buckey is Ruby's husband

⁴lottery—procedure used to reduce the number of participants in a contest

AUGUSTA: What else did you find out about the Cake-Walk tradition, dear?

50 TAYLOR: Well, cakes have been offered as prizes for centuries. This is a reversal,
we're awarded prizes for our cakes. Thousands of years ago cakes were
given as offerings to the dead.

RUBY: You don't see dead people in the contest do you?

MARTHA: Men have as much right to enter our contests as we do to enter theirs.

RUBY: Men can keep their contests to themselves. And men don't cook!

55 MARTHA: They do so. My husband is a terrific cook!

RUBY: Hmph. Your husband, of course *he* would cook.

AUGUSTA (*To MARTHA*): Lucky you. Everett can't even boil an egg, helpless.

RUBY: My Buckey can boil an egg if the Twins and I aren't around. And he
60 cooks over the campfire for Buckey Jr. and the Cub Scouts: weanies and
beans and marshmallows. But none of this sissy cake stuff. It's not natural.

MARTHA: It is so. Leigh's father does it. Tell her Leigh.

LEIGH (*Stares at MARTHA, pause*): My father is one of the leading pastry chefs in
North America.

RUBY: I don't believe it.

65 LEIGH: That's not surprising. The Irish aren't famed for their pastry really.

MARTHA: Leigh's father designed cakes for three of Elizabeth Taylor's weddings.
He could have designed the Royal Wedding's too but he was too busy. And
her brother! Leigh's brother. Tell them about Ashley Wilkes, Leigh.

LEIGH: My brother, Ashley Wilkes Cleary, designs cakes for the Stars. And my
70 mother. She can make the most incredible dresses out of old drapes—

MARTHA: But she can't cook at all. So you see, Leigh comes from a fine line of
male cooks.

RUBY (*Perplexed, turns on TAYLOR*): So where is it?

TAYLOR: What?

75 RUBY: Your cake.

TAYLOR: Oh. In my car. It's coconut. The cake . . . not uh, the car.

RUBY: Why didn't you bring it with you?

TAYLOR: Oh there's not enough room to park a car in here.

RUBY: Your cake!

80 TAYLOR: It took me forever to find this room and the registration headquarters,
too. I was afraid my cake would get lost. I'd like to get it now but I'll
probably forget my way back.

LEIGH: I'll help you. We can get to the parking lot through this door.

TAYLOR: Thank you. (*Opens door, the wrong way first time, for her.*)
85 After you.

Continued

RUBY: She's finally taking my advice, too fussy and you'll wind up an old maid.⁵

MARTHA: It isn't like that at all.

RUBY: Plain as the eye can see and you can't see it.

MARTHA: That's nuts! She's a—(*Stops herself.*)

90 RUBY: Hussy?

MARTHA: She's a nice person. She's trying to make him feel welcome.

RUBY: Why? He's not welcome.

MARTHA: He is so. Look he's going through a lot right now. You try being the only man in the Cake-Walk.

95 RUBY: I wish I was. Then I could enter a Snackin' Cake⁶ and take home a prize. Minorities always do when they call attention to themselves.

MARTHA: He can't help being a man.

Colleen Curran
Contemporary Canadian playwright

⁵old maid—derogatory term for an unmarried woman

⁶Snackin' Cake—a prepackaged cake mix

IX. Questions 60 to 70 in your Questions Booklet are based on this article.

A THIN DISGUISE

We all wear disguises. The simple act of dressing is disguising. Clothes are disguises, beards, pitch of voice, what we say, what we keep secret. Costumes declare us, but disguises protect us from exposure. Wearing them, we blend in. Every salesman dressing for a client knows the drill, every young intern pulling on a white lab coat, every recent graduate struggling with an unfamiliar suit and tie.

In two decades as a magazine writer, I practiced disguise, never entirely sure if the practice was a necessity or a perquisite,¹ but thoroughly enjoying it. I wore khaki in East Africa, denim at a New Mexican quarter-horse race, an air of sophistication around preppy cocaine dealers in midtown Chicago. . . . My purpose wasn't deception. My purpose was simply to approach my prey close enough to cast the net.

So I thought I understood disguises when I went out among farmers recently to observe their work. More than most groups, farmers are cautious of outsiders. They're aware that city people consider them common. They have a uniform of their own, distinguishable even at a distance. They know when to wave at a passing pickup truck and when to ignore a stranger driving by. I bought work boots and jeans and flannel shirts. I exchanged my contact lenses for glasses, and wore a hat that advertised hybrid seed corn. I wasn't entirely a fraud. I had spent six adolescent years on a Missouri farm. I could still drive a tractor. I hadn't forgotten how to call hogs.

Tom Bauer, as I will call the farmer who has allowed me to observe his life, encouraged my attempts at camouflage. He had trouble enough explaining why someone was following him around with a notebook. Disguised, I could appear, to the casual eye at least, to be a hired man, a census-taker, a cousin down on his luck.

Tom was wary of me at first, but he taught me about farming. I told him stories about traveling the world, and we came to be friends. Though I never drove his combine, I disked his wheat fields and trucked tons of corn and soybeans to the elevator beside the Missouri River where he sold them.

The deer-hunting season, late fall, is a high point in Tom's year. Deer share the 1,000 acres he farms. Once a year, he hunts them to put venison in his freezer, a harvest as honest as his harvests of cattle and hogs, animals men also kill to eat.

Continued

¹perquisite—an incidental benefit attached to employment

Deer season brings Tom together with his brothers. With a crowd of sons,
35 they camp out in an old house trailer Tom has set up on blocks in a grove of trees
beside a pond. A propane tank feeds a stove to heat stew. Older brother Cowboy,
older brother Dale, Tom and the crowd of sons dine, joke, reminisce, play
blackjack for pennies. From warm sleeping bags they disperse in the predawn
darkness to the blinds² Tom has built.

40 Tom invited me to join them. A chance to win a deer and a share of family
camaraderie were the most generous gifts he had to give. I borrowed a rifle and
acquired further disguises: insulated brown canvas coveralls and rubber boots, a
hunting permit, doe scent to cover my tracks. Tom arranged a blind for me beside
a deer superhighway in a stretch of woods all my own.

45 I sat unmoving for two hours in the cold darkness, watched the moon set and
the sky lighten, heard the crashing, like human footsteps, of the deer fanning out
to browse, and opened the season firing wildly above a doe's head. Hunting again
at dusk that afternoon, I wounded a deer but failed to bring it down. Tom and
Cowboy heard my shots and drove over to help; we searched into a stubble field
50 until dark. The trail ended, which meant the bleeding stopped. The wound was
probably superficial, Tom counseled me to alleviate my guilt.

That demonstration of incompetence should have cautioned me. It didn't.
By then, I believed my own disguise. I thought I was a farmer and had grown up
with guns, though I hadn't been near a rifle in 25 years. Outside the trailer in the
55 stir of departure the next afternoon—pickup trucks backing and revving—I
shucked a round from the magazine of my rifle into the chamber, preparing to
unload. Instead of pointing the rifle barrel up into the air as I ought to have done,
I held it parallel to the ground. I thought I had control. The hammer slipped
under my thumb. The rifle fired. The terrible explosion blew through the woods.

60 In horror, I looked where the barrel was pointing—between two pickups. I
felt a surge of relief. Then Cowboy jumped from one of the pickups, flailing his
arms. He snatched off his cap, bobbed up and down, rubbed the top of his head.
I've killed him, I thought. I've shot him in the head and killed him. He just
doesn't know it yet.

65 Cowboy didn't fall. I laid down the rifle and went to him. Tom came out of
the pickup to his brother's side. There wasn't any blood. "You were white as a
ghost," Tom told me later. I started to hope I hadn't taken a life, brought grief to a
dozen families, ruined my own life as well.

70 The bullet, a .30-caliber soft-nosed slug, had drilled into the pickup cab just
above the rear window, channeled along the steel roof and burst through the
windshield. A fragment had torn downward through the sun visor, entered the

Continued

²blinds—concealed places for hunters

crown of Cowboy's cap, snipped a few hairs, exited the cap just above the sweatband. The heat of its passage had only startled him. The small lethal shrapnel left no mark.

75 "I feel a little closer to my Maker," Cowboy wrote me later. I paid for body work on his pickup and a new windshield. I put away guns forever. The Bauers forgave me. "It was careless," Tom said, generously finding the good in it, "but we'll remember it for years to come and it'll remind us all to be careful." It will fade to a story told in the trailer over stew: the day that city writer hotshot nearly
80 killed Cowboy.

 It won't fade for me. My heart pounds whenever I remember it, with horror but also with shame. I never was much of an actor. My farmer friends have worked a lifetime to learn their roles. I thought I could just breeze in and wing it. As a result of that arrogance, I nearly killed a man. I trusted too much to
85 disguises. Any man's work is a lifetime of learning. At best, disguises only open the door.

Richard Rhodes
Contemporary American writer

Credits

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